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RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0918
RHMFIS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHNO/USDELMC BRUSSELS BE IMMEDIATE
RHMFIS/USNMR SHAPE BE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L USNATO 000230

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ACTION REQUEST: EAPC MEETING INVITATION TO THE DEFENSE MINISTER OF BELARUS

REF: JUNE 3 HAMILTON (EUR/RPM) - GREANEY E-MAILS

Classified By: Acting POLAD Hoot Baez
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 5.

¶2. (C) As instructed, USNATO delivered Ref A guidance in the June 4 meeting of NATO's Political Committee, explaining that it would be premature to move forward with the NATO-Belarus information security agreement, and that NATO should not extend an invitation to the Defense Minister of Belarus to attend the June 12 meeting of EAPC Defense Ministers.

¶3. (C) No Ally was prepared to support the U.S. position. Seven Allies spoke to express "regret and disappointment" at the U.S. decision, questioning why NATO is sending the wrong message to Belarus at a time when relations have begun to thaw and encouragement could pay dividends. Three Allies asked if the United States could reconsider, noting that the invitation to this event comes once every two years, and that NATO had already agreed to meetings with other officials of similar rank. Romania made a plea that the U.S. consider allowing NATO to extend an invitation to the Defense Minister of Belarus on an exceptional basis, as a demonstration of Allied support for the EAPC. Several Allies also suggested that NATO risks becoming marginalized on the issue of Belarus relations at a time when the EU is making a conditional approach to Minsk.

¶4. (C) Lithuania has also separately approached the Ambassador seek U.S. assent for a more active NATO engagement with Belarus.

¶5. (C) Action request. Post seeks authorization to transmit the following text to Allies on June 5, in advance of the issuance of invitations to the EAPC Defense Ministers:

Begin text:

With reference to Allied views as expressed in the NATO Political Committee's June 4 discussion on Belarus, and given the two-year gap between EAPC Defense Ministerials, Washington is prepared to allow NATO to invite the Defense Minister of Belarus to the June 12 meeting of EAPC Defense Ministerial meeting.

Such assent does not prejudice the outcome of an ongoing Belarus policy review in Washington and it remains premature to move the information agreement forward at this time. The

United States will discuss the outcome of this policy review with Allies at the appropriate time.

End text.

¶6. (C) Comment: This is a low-cost move in a multilateral format. It is also an opportunity to show Allies that the U.S. takes Allied opinion into account. USNATO assesses that the Allied goodwill generated by this approach would pay dividends in other areas, and the benefits would exceed the low impact of allowing the NATO staff to invite the Defense Minister to the EAPC meeting. End Comment.

DAALDER